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ER 10-1104/a

FEB 1958

Mr. John L. Simpson
Chairman of Finance Committee
Bechtel Corporation
155 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California

Dear John:

I appreciate your letter of February 11, bringing Steve's brochure on the Arab Unity Highway to my attention. While this is not strictly in my bailiwick, I looked the brochure over with a good deal of interest and I understand that it is receiving study and consideration in other departments of the Government here.

With best wishes.

Faithfully,

Signed

Allen W. Dulles
Director

STATINTL O/DCI/[redacted]:jnf 20 Feb 58
Dist:
Orig - Add
STATINTL 1 - [redacted] w/cy ltr from Dearborn
1 - DCI direct
1 - FMC
→ 1 - ER w/basic & enc
1 - Reading direct

P.S. Also I got ahead of you and already had a copy. [redacted] sent me a copy of his letter to you. I feared this result but no harm in trying.

AWD

STAT

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BECHTEL CORPORATION
ENGINEERS-CONSTRUCTORS
155 SANSOME STREET
SAN FRANCISCO

10-1114

JOHN L. SIMPSON
CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

February 11, 1958

Dear Allen:

You may be interested in this brochure on an Arab Unity Highway.

Perhaps it will take more than highways to bring order into the Middle East, but anyway this is an idea which Steve, who always likes the practical approach, thinks may have merit.

If you think Foster might be interested you might show it to him.

With all the best,

Sincerely,

John

Enc.
Mr. Allen W. Dulles
2430 E Street, N.W.
Washington 25, D. C.

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10-1183

THE WHITE HOUSE **CONFIDENTIAL**
WASHINGTON

February 18, 1958

MEMORANDUM TO: The Honorable C. Douglas Dillon
Deputy Under Secretary of State

SUBJECT: Middle East Development - Mr. Dillon's memorandum of February 10, 1958

I think that a highway project of this magnitude should have a lesser priority than proposals for other kinds of economic development, especially those which have a more direct bearing on the refugee problem. However, there may be an economic justification for considering a part of the project, perhaps in substitution for the proposed Hejaz railway.

I understand that the French have developed a new method of road construction in desert areas, which might be worth looking into.

Mr. Smith's proposal for a study of a regional air transportation system should be worth while, especially in light of paragraphs 22 and 27 of NSC 5726/1. The OCB working group, which prepared a progress report dated September 11, 1957, on Middle East aviation matters was chaired by Mr. Lawrence C. Vans of the Department of State. He should have information pertinent to the proposal.

F. M. Dearborn, Jr.
Special Assistant
to the President

cc: Mr. Herter
Mr. James H. Smith, Jr.
Mr. Rountree
Mr. Allen Dulles

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PRELIMINARY REPORT

Arab Unity Highway

January 15, 1958

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For many years Americans who have lived and worked in the Middle East have sought ways and means of contributing to the welfare and progress of the Arab peoples.

Resulting from many discussions, the thought has been developed that a system of highways between the capitals and centers of population would be exceedingly important to the Arab nations and that technical assistance and material help in the implementation of this idea would be appropriate.

Thus, this Preliminary Study was conceived and is humbly presented to those who share the desire to further Arab unity.

S. D. BECHTEL

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Introduction

The Middle East is an area of great importance to the entire world. Today it is occupied by a number of independent countries most of which are inhabited by one race of people (the Arabs) with a common language, a common religion, and a community of interests.

In ancient times two great civilizations were located in this area. Both reached a state of high cultural development and great prosperity, profiting from a communicating system of protected caravan routes. Today, however, caravan routes no longer will satisfy the transportation needs of these Arab lands.

Elsewhere in the world peoples, such as those of the United States of America, have achieved a high degree of unity even though spread over large areas of land. In every case, unity and cooperation have been furthered by good communications.

Economically there has been an increase in profitable trade which, in turn, has fostered prosperity and raised living standards. A better standard of living makes for contented peoples and internal and external peace.

Culturally the closer association made possible by better communications promotes understanding and the interchange of ideas, to the advantage of all who participate.

The desire of the Arab countries to cooperate with each other is manifested by their forming of the Arab League and by the strengthening of cultural and religious ties. Historically, it is true that improved communications promote such cooperation—and that cooperation, in turn, builds the strength—economic, political and cultural—of those who cooperate.

The wisdom of this view has been apparent through the centuries. Nearly 2,000 years ago the Romans built roads to all parts of the Empire and paved many of them, including some that pass through Arab lands. Remnants of these roads still exist. The great system of Roman roads has been credited with having been an important factor in preserving Roman civilization for so many centuries.

Travel over land always has been difficult in the Middle East because of the arid character of the country. Conditions are similar to those that

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exist in the southwestern part of the United States of America where, in an area of comparable size, the same problems are found as in the Syrian and Arabian deserts. The experience of a century of road-building in the deserts of the American Southwest would be helpful in planning and building a system of highways in the Arab lands.

It is proposed that existing roads be improved and new roads built into a modern highway system that will connect the major Arab capitals —the *Arab Unity Highway*. The route is rich in tradition.

Middle East Routes of the Past

Mesopotamia on the east and Egypt on the west were the cradles of modern civilization. Mastering the obstacle of the deserts, their peoples made contact before the dawn of history. Trade and travel routes had become well organized by 1500 B.C.

Over thousands of years, numerous trails have been in use between Syria and Mesopotamia. Tadmor, later known as Palmyra, was mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions of 1100 B.C. as a center of the caravan trade. During the second and third centuries A.D., the Palmyrene routes to the East enjoyed extensive use.

The main north-south route along the westerly border has been a great highway since prehistoric times. Even before Petra became the center of the Nabatean Empire, caravan traffic between Arabia and Syria was heavy. When the great Hajj caravans began their yearly journeys to Mecca they chose this way south from Damascus, so that Darb el Hajj, as part of it was called in the Middle Ages, became a heavily traveled thoroughfare.

One of the great traditional paths of the faithful ran south and southwest from Baghdad to the sacred cities of the Hejaz, reaching Mecca by way of Hail and returning from Medina. Known as the Darb Zubaida, it was made practicable for travel about 800 A.D. by the construction of fortified reservoirs.

The modern period in desert travel began in the 1920's. Motor cars and trucks were first put into regular commercial use in 1923 and thereafter

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travel across the desert grew, within the limitations imposed by lack of adequate roads.

As shown by the history of its routes of travel, the Middle East is the connecting link between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It has been called "the crossroads of the continents." But that name is more fanciful than accurate because as yet there are few "crossroads" in the modern sense.

The Arab Unity Highway

Engineers well acquainted with conditions in the Middle East were commissioned to lay out on paper a system of trunk roads which would strengthen cultural, religious, political and economic ties among the Arab countries.

The proposed highway system, shown on accompanying maps, connects the capitals of the principal Arab countries in the Middle East, and covers the traditional overland routes to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. The westerly highway location follows the way of the Prophet, and the central route the legendary corridors for the seasonal grazing of the herds. The pathway of modern Arab development is followed to the north and west. Merging of the ancient routes of caravan travel and the routes of modern development would result in a comprehensive highway system that would well meet the needs and requirements of the modern Arab, and would result in an ever-increasing bond of friendship and respect among the various Arab countries.

The basic standards considered for the highway system are those generally accepted for earth, sand-clay, and gravel highways in the southwestern part of the United States. The criterion for determining the best and most economical location of the highway between control points is deemed to be the balanced and experienced judgment of men with knowledge gained from building similar types of highways in arid regions of the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the world. This would insure a location and design of the highway that would result in the greatest possible good from the money expended.

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In estimating the costs of an *Arab Unity Highway* system, a good pioneering type of road has been considered with due foresight to be exercised in working out the location and design of the highway so that later improvements could be made without the necessity of making expensive changes in the location or otherwise wasting any considerable part of the work already accomplished. The general rules should be to avoid sharp curves and to maintain several hundred feet of visibility on steep grades in the interest of safety; further, to provide ample width for vehicles to pass each other without leaving the traveled way. In mountainous regions the route should be adapted to the lay of the land in order to avoid expensive construction. The surface of the highway should be such as to remain reasonably firm and smooth and to become neither very dusty nor very muddy under any combination of weather and traffic conditions.

In a few short sections of the highway system a hard-surfaced road exists, and it is proposed that improvement work be done on these sections as required. In sections where the highway must be graded, it is generally proposed that a suitable type of road mix oil surfacing would be applied and, in areas where the traffic would be very light and such expense not justified, a water-bound gravel or crusher-run rock macadam could be used.

The general specifications for the highway would be to fit the grade line to the ground surface so as to keep down the amount of grading necessary and to balance cuts and fills to the end that wherever grading is done it would be to the best possible advantage and effective drainage would be provided. The highway surface should be crowned so as to shed water to the side ditches and wherever the highway would be in an excavation to provide suitable side ditches so that the water would be turned from the road. Cross drainage would be provided by culverts for minor drainage channels and by dips in lieu of bridges across most stream beds or wadis.

MIDDLE EAST CRAFTSMEN AND MATERIALS

The commercial growth of the Middle East in recent years has resulted in the development of numerous independent Arab contractors and a reservoir of craftsmen skilled in the trades required for highway con-

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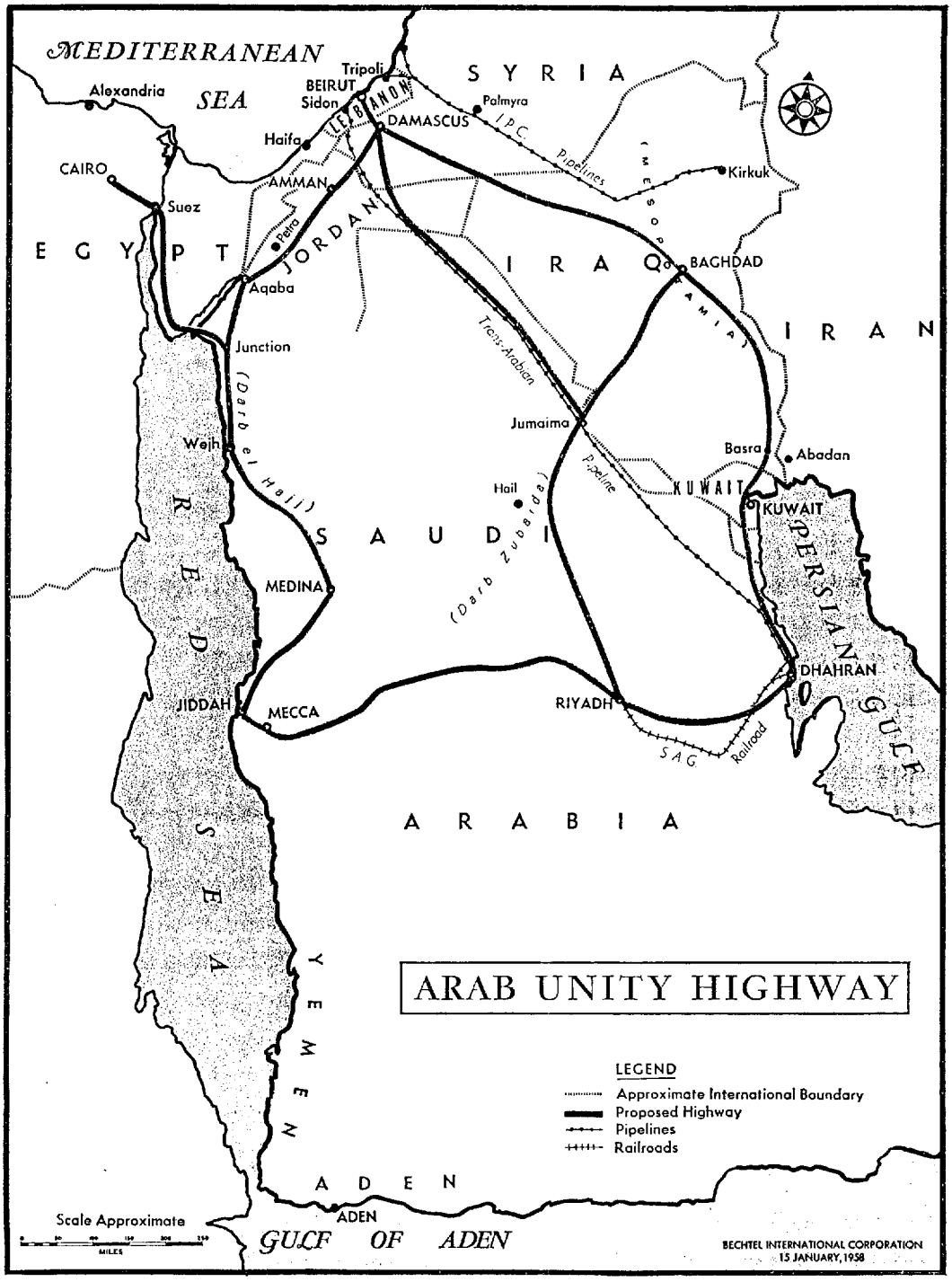

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struction. Further, most of the necessary materials are available in the area. Fine and coarse aggregates and petroleum products are in plentiful supply.

ESTIMATED MILEAGE AND COSTS

As planned, the highway system is approximately 4,767 miles in length and would cost about $380,000,000 to construct. The routes pass through a number of Middle East countries and the distance and expenditure in each country is estimated as follows:

	Mileage	*Cost*
Egypt	282	$ 20,000,000
Iraq	950	56,700,000
Jordan	310	31,000,000
Kuwait	135	11,300,000
Lebanon	40	1,000,000
Saudi Arabia	2,700	228,300,000
Syria	350	31,700,000
Totals	4,767	$380,000,000

Broad coverage of the entire area is provided by the suggested program, as indicated in the following tabulation which contains more detailed information on the distances and estimated costs of the highway between the various capitals and centers of population:

SECTION			*COST*		
From	*To*	*Miles*	*Per Mile*	*Total*	*Remarks*
Beirut	Damascus	60	$25,000	$1,500,000	Improve existing road.
Damascus	Baghdad	500	85,000	42,500,000	New road—present route.
Baghdad	Basra	305			Now under construction.

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SECTION			COST		
From	*To*	*Miles*	*Per Mile*	*Total*	*Remarks*
Basra	Kuwait	103	100,000	10,300,000	New construction.
Kuwait	Dhahran	265	100,000	26,500,000	New construction.
Dhahran	Riyadh	300	91,000	27,300,000	Partial new construction.
Riyadh	Mecca	600	95,000	57,000,000	New construction.
Damascus	Jumaima	565	95,000	53,675,000	New road—present route.
Jumaima	Baghdad	273	85,000	23,205,000	New construction
Jumaima	Riyadh Rd.	360	100,000	36,000,000	New construction.
Damascus	Amman	136	82,500	11,220,000	New road—present route.
Amman	Aqaba	200	94,000	18,800,000	New road—present route.
Aqaba	Medina	500	90,000	45,000,000	New construction
Medina	Jiddah	240	10,000	2,400,000	Improve existing road.
Jiddah	Mecca	40	25,000	1,000,000	Improve existing road.
Cairo	Suez	80	25,000	2,000,000	Improve existing road.
Suez	Junction	240	90,000	21,600,000	New construction. Ferry across Strait of Tiran.
	TOTAL	4,767		$380,000,000	

If the entire program is not undertaken, the greatest benefit would come from connecting the capitals of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria—Baghdad, Riyadh and Damascus. This highway system would be approximately 1,695 miles long and would cost about $155,700,000.

SCHEDULE OF CONSTRUCTION TIME

The *Arab Unity Highway* could, if desired, be built as a priority program in two or three years after the necessary money becomes available by using a combination of qualified Arab road constructors and an experienced engineering and management organization to expedite and coordinate the entire work. However, there is probably insufficient heavy-

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duty road-construction equipment within the area and it would be necessary to bring in additional equipment, materials, and supplies to supplement those available in the Middle East.

Should it be desired to build the highway system over a period of time, this, as a practical matter, could be done by taking the job in the desired stages. The first logical stage would be to build basic roads where none now exist, the second to improve the line and grade of the entire highway system, and the third to surface the highway system.

SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ARAB HIGHWAY SYSTEM

A highway system of this kind would provide the most desirable and economical means of transportation to meet the Middle East's present and future needs. By making possible rapid, low-cost travel between the countries such a highway would go far to stimulate genuine cooperation.

The inevitable increase in trade that would result would provide a strong economic base and bring about a higher standard of living. Mutual Arab interests—religious, political, cultural—would be well served by the establishment of fast modern communications. The security of the Arab lands would benefit greatly from the existence of such a strategic network of internal highways. Good transportation would aid in the development of natural resources which, in turn, would contribute to the strength of the area and the realization by its peoples of their most desired objectives.

For these reasons, the linking of the Arab countries by a highway system would be a significant step toward achievement of true Arab unity.

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الطرق العربية تؤدي للوحدة

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